State Representative

Peggy Welch



Representing Greene, Lawrence and Monroe Counties

How To Reach Representative

Peggy Welch

RESIDENCE

2802 St. Remy Cir. Bloomington, IN 4740 (812) 323-7978

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

House of Representatives 200 W. Washington St. Indianapolis, IN 46204-2786 1-800-382-9842

WEBSITE

www.state.in.us/R60

Dear Friends,

The 111th Indiana General Assembly had many accomplishments, including \$974 million in tax cuts, a plan to distribute the \$4 billion Indiana will receive from the tobacco settlement, and increases in funding for public schools and the CHOICE home health program. I have detailed several of these items along with providing a breakdown of the various Build Indiana projects and the additional funding for roads in District 60.

The 2000 session of the General Assembly ended the first of March, but the work of a legislator does not end with the adjournment of the legislature. We are elected to pass laws, but we also serve as educators and advocates for the citizens of our districts. It is always rewarding to speak to elementary and high school classes about their government and to have been of assistance to a constituent who has been having a problem with a state agency.

This will be my last official newsletter until after the November election. However, I am still available as your state representative to assist with problems, concerns, or questions with state government. You may contact me at 1-800-382-9842 in Indianapolis or 812/323-7978 in Bloomington. Also, I will be available at many fairs and festivals in the district.

I hope you have a wonderful and safe summer!

Sincerely,

Summer 2000

REASSESSMENT

An update on the property tax reassessment

HEALTH CARE

New legislation benefits patients

EDUCATION

Improving schools for our children

Build Indiana Funds

Lottery profits help communities with special projects

* DETAILS INSIDE *

An Update from Representative Peggy Welch

SUMMER STUDY COMMITTEES

I have been appointed to the following summer/fall study committees:

County Government Study
Commission, Chair - The commission was
established by statute to study how to improve
the effectiveness and efficiency of county
government and the functions and duties of
elected county officials.

Public Finance Study Commission, Chair - We will review and evaluate relevant public investment statutes and make recommendations regarding public finance issues.

Health Finance Commission - In general, the commission is to study health finance in Indiana. In 1999, the Legislative Council assigned the following additional charge to the Commission: to study the need for a comprehensive long term care plan.

Alzheimer's Disease and Related Senile Dementia Task Force - Assist the department in its duties related to Alzheimers disease and related senile dementia, including formulation of rules. The task force was given the additional charge to examine the need for alternative care options for individuals prone to violent behavior due to the effects of dementia or related diseases.

Local Government Tax Control Board - Examine, consider and make recommendations regarding appeals from civil taxing units regarding levy limitations.

Please contact me if you would like additional information about these or other study committees.

Property Tax Ruling



Rep. Welch presented to Bloomfield Clerk-Treasurer Sondra Thompson tulip trees to be planted in the town park.

The State Tax Court recently issued a ruling that orders deadlines on when the next property tax reassessment must be accomplished.

In December of 1998 the State Supreme Court ruled that the property assessment guidelines used in the collection of property taxes were unconstitutional because different types of property were not treated equitably. The Court mandated the State Tax Board to develop new guidelines based on "objectively verifiable data".

After the Court's ruling, I supported legislation in the 1999 session to postpone the reassessment.

This postponement would have allowed the state tax board time to work out the best reassessment system for Indiana. This also would have given the legislature time to review the guidelines and ease the tax shift due to reassessment. Unfortunately, the bill did not pass out of conference committee.

During the past session, I authored House Bill 1005, which would have required the new reassessment rules to be completed by July 1, 2001. The court ruled that the reassessment manual must be adopted by June 1, 2001 with the reassessment to be completed by March 2002 affecting the property tax statements of 2003.

The good news is that the court recognized that it will take time to adopt a new tax manual. I support this portion of the court's ruling and applaud the court's requirement of monthly reports from the State Tax Board. The less than good news is that after the new assessment rule is adopted, the State Tax Board and assessors only have nine months in which to complete the assessment—a process that usually takes 20 months. In this nine months, computer software will have to be upgraded or completely changed, the assessors will have to be trained in the new manual and software and approximately 3 million assessments will have to be completed.

During the 2001 session, the General Assembly will be working with the State Tax Board and assessors to determine how we can assist them to accomplish their responsibilities. But more importantly, we will be working to determine how we can protect homeowners, farmers, and small businesses from a possible large increase in property taxes, plus examining the role of property taxes in our whole tax structure. I would like to hear from you with your ideas.

Let Me Hear From You: 1-800-382-9842

Health Care Issues

As a practicing nurse, I am committed to helping people live healthier, more productive lives. I will again be serving on the Health Finance Commission, a summer/fall study committee. Study topics are still being determined, but possible subjects will be long-term care, prescription drug assistance, ways of helping the disabled enter the work force, health insurance mandates, and privacy of personal health information. Below is an update on a few health issues.

- Hoosier Healthwise -- Health care is available for children, pregnant women and low-income working families. 115,000 children have signed up in Indiana —one of the most successful programs in the country. Families making up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level (equal to about \$34,000 for a family of four) may qualify for Hoosier Healthwise. To find out if you qualify, contact Hoosier Healthwise at 1-800-889-9949.
- \$20 million for prescription drugs -- Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. The legislature allocated \$20 million from the national tobacco settlement to help senior citizens on lower incomes purchase prescription drugs.

The Prescription Drug Advisory Committee is currently holding hearings. In addition, three task forces have been established to deliberate on particular areas of overall concern: Administrative Structure, Eligibility & Benefits and Evaluation. A final report to the Governor from the Prescription Drug Advisory Committee is expected to be presented on September 1st. After this is done the Family and Social Services Agency will construct and implement the program.

• CHOICE home health care -- Indiana provides CHOICE in-home services like health care, home cleaning, nutrition, and transportation to permit people who are elderly or disabled to remain in their home instead of being forced into a nursing home. The CHOICE program is a cost-efficient program for the state -- saving up to \$1700 per month per patient. In the most recent biennial state budget, \$42.6 million was appropriated for CHOICE services each year. For more information on CHOICE services in our area, contact the The Endwright Center at (812) 876-3383.



Rep. Welch and Bloomington Girl Scout Troop #251 presented flags to Binford Elementary School in honor of Binford teachers, past and present.

Members of the Troop include: Mercades Poteat, Megan Carpenter, Tia and Chloe Senchuk, Natalie McCrory, Cezanne Otter, Allison Hunt, Rene Lloyd, Grace Ardery, Jaymie Wahlen, Amanda Utnage, Hannah Wright, Tricia Whitaker, Laura Estes, Carly Band and Leaders Patty Ardery, Martha Lloyd and Debbie Whalen.

EDUCATION UPDATE

Education Roundtable - In 1999, the General Assembly formalized the Education Roundtable which makes education recommendations to the Governor, Superintendent of Public Education, the General Assembly, and Indiana State Board of Education. The Roundtable is comprised of persons who represent business/community and education interests.

Funding - In the two year state budget, public schools received an average funding increase of 4.7 percent, with a minimum funding increase of 2.5 percent. Schools were also appropriated an additional \$45 million in 2000 to cover shortfalls in the Average Daily Membership (ADM) formula. Funds were included for at-risk and academic honors programs, and local schools and libraries received \$76 million for technology programs and updates. To better reflect the needs of the job market, the vocational education funding formula was reviewed for possible changes. And Indiana's institutions of higher learning had their budgets increased by 7 percent in 2000 and 4.7 percent in 2001.

School Accountability -- New laws provide for the establishment of a standard of continuous improvement for ALL schools.

Academic Standards Established -- For the first time, academic standards for language arts and mathematics are required for EACH grade level, K-12. These standards are required to be comparable to national and international standards.

Graduation Exam - The purpose of the ISTEP Gateway Examination is to ensure that students who graduate from Indiana schools can read, write, and compute math and are prepared for postsecondary education. The test is first taken during the sophomore year to allow time for remediation and additional opportunities to pass the exam.

DISTRICT 60 CAPITAL PROJECTS

DISTRICT 60 BUILD INDIANA PROJECTS

Since 1989, \$229.9 million has been distributed statewide from lottery and gaming profits for Build Indiana Projects. It has been my privilege to have been of assistance in helping bring some of this funding back home to District 60 and the citizens of Greene, Lawrence and Monroe counties. The organizations and projects listed below have received appropriations in the current biennial budget.

Monroe County

Community Healthcare Foundation -- \$80,000
Ellettsville Rescue/Fire -- \$25,000
Courthouse Structural Repair -- \$50,000
Ellettsville - Recreational Family Park -- \$37,000
Emergency Management -- \$60,000
Fair Board -- \$104,000
Firefighters Association -- \$40,000
Perry Township Fire Department -- \$25,000
Indian Creek Firefighters Association -- \$80,000

Unified Dispatch Signal Enhancement -- \$50,000 Ellettsville Government Center -- \$300,000

Lawrence County

Perry Township VFA -- \$134,000

Greene County

Eastern Greene County VFD -- \$34,000 Emergency Management -- \$10,000 Firefighters Association -- \$5,000 Highland Twp. VFD -- \$46,000

ROAD FUNDING

We approved an additional \$200 million to build and repair local roads in last year's state budget. This funding is in addition to regular funding from gas taxes. Here is the breakdown for our district.

Monroe County

Bloomington

Ellettsville

S90,803

Greene County

Bloomfield

\$30,405

Lawrence County

\$1.8 million

\$1.4 million

\$90,803

Greene County

\$839,360

\$30,405

The amount listed for each city is in addition to the county total

Bulk Rate U.S. Postage PAID Indiana House of Representatives



Rep. Peggy Welch 200 W. Washington St. Indianapolis, IN 46204-2786

Call the Statehouse toll-free 1-800-382-9842

Printed on Recycled Paper

(60)